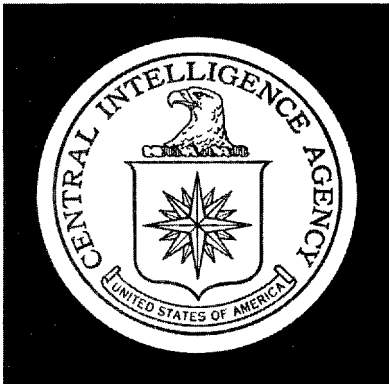


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*Vietnam: (Information as of 4:30 AM EST)

South Vietnamese Military Developments: A new round of Viet Cong attacks yesterday and this morning interrupted the lull in military ground activity of the past few days.

More than 200 mortar rounds were fired on the airstrip at Camp Holloway in the capital of Pleiku Province early in the morning of 7 January. Initial reports indicate that a reaction force established contact with the enemy. Several buildings and 20 or more aircraft were damaged. At least five US personnel were killed, 32 were wounded. The Camp Holloway airstrip, which was the scene of the February 1965 attack that provoked the US-GVN air retaliation against North Vietnam, is no longer Pleiku city's main air facility.

The Viet Cong initiated two separate company-sized attacks yesterday near heavily-defended population centers in different parts of the country. One of these attacks, against a Regular Force outpost near Cu Chi in Hau Nghia Province, resulted in 18 South Vietnamese soldiers killed and 15 wounded. The Communists lost 16 men in the fighting. In the other attack on an ARVN patrol outside of Da Nang, six government troops were killed.

Farther south on the coast of the delta province of Kien Hoa, a US Marine battalion and two South Vietnamese Marine battalions began Operation DECKHOUSE V yesterday with amphibious as well as helicopter landings. So far, no contact has been reported in this operation, the first in IV Corps to involve a US ground combat unit. Kien Hoa's coast has been a long-time Viet Cong redoubt and infiltration point for supplies and personnel.

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Laos: Prime Minister Souvanna will probably get a more cooperative National Assembly as a result of last week's elections, but the results have also strengthened the hand of key regional commanders.

A still incomplete tally of votes indicates that as many as 40 of the new National Assembly's 59 seats will be occupied by deputies who are elected on the prime minister's "united front" slate. Although these deputies are pledged to support Souvanna and Laos' tripartite government, they probably owe primary allegiance to the military commanders responsible for their success. The deputies will probably back Souvanna only as long as he retains the support of these regional commanders.

As expected, the election has weakened the positions of neutralist and rightist politicians. More important, however, were the losses suffered by General Kouprasith, chief of the general staff, who managed to elect only three of nine candidates he supported. Kouprasith, who has been the strongest military figure in Laos for several years, will be especially concerned over the gains made by the regional commanders, whose power and independence he has been trying to curtail for over a year.

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Nigeria:

[redacted] the Nigerian leaders' talks in Ghana this week focused only on some of the most immediate problems relating to the crisis. Their major effort was directed toward patching up their interim military regime. All parties apparently agreed that they should be in no hurry to return Nigeria to civilian rule. The meetings were marked by frequent heated exchanges, and no date was fixed for the next session. [redacted]

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Ceylon: The leftist opposition so far has avoided organizing civil disorders to protest the government's halving of the rice ration last month. It probably fears that Prime Minister Senanayake will use any agitation as a pretext to postpone a parliamentary by-election scheduled for 15 January. The opposition hopes that a strong antigovernment vote on 15 January will demonstrate the unpopularity of the rice cut and give further impetus to its long-term campaign against Senanayake.

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